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News Release

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Chisholm man to pay \$1,500 fine for illegally possessing threatened wildlife

A 60-year-old Chisholm man was sentenced last week to pay a \$1,500 fine and serve two years probation for illegally possessing threatened wildlife in Minnesota.

United States Chief Magistrate Judge Raymond Erickson sentenced Roderick Robert Kottom, also known as Papa Fisher, Aug. 7 in Duluth. Kottom was charged Feb. 12, 2007, with two misdemeanor counts. A bench trial was conducted in August 2007, and Judge Erickson found Kottom guilty on one count of unlawful possession of threatened wildlife on April 25, 2008.

According to court documents, on Dec. 14, 2004, Kottom did knowingly and unlawfully possess a mounted Canada Lynx, that had been taken unlawfully in violation of the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began investigating Kottom in December 2003 after discovering an advertisement on a taxidermy Web site offering animal pelts for sale.

In 2003, the Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) at the University of Minnesota-Duluth designed a study to determine the distribution of the Canada Lynx after NRRI learned the lynx was returning to Minnesota. The study, called the Minnesota Lynx Project, was also aimed at determining the habitat the species was using and to find out if the species could persist in the state.

NRRI used Global Positioning System telemetry, and GPS collars were placed upon lynx, which had been caught in live traps and later released. The GPS system allowed NRRI to study the animals' locations and charted their distribution throughout the state. Hair, tissue and other samples were also collected and logged.

During an executed search warrant of Kottom's residence, authorities seized a mounted

Canada Lynx. A DNA analysis was conducted, and matched that of a lynx in the NRRI database. The animal in question was originally located in the Isabella region, located in the Superior National Forest.

This case was the result of an investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota DNR, and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jeffrey M. Bryan and Steven L. Schleicher.